

NEWSLETTER 1971/5

First, a welcome to the following new members:

- Leland S. Brown, Baldwin Road, Rd 2, Mount Kisco, New York
10549, U.S.A. Cumbrae
- R. Cecil-Wright, The Old Cottage, Hermitage Lane, Detling,
Kent.
- P.J.Cox, Q.C., 40, George Rd., Edgbaston, Birmingham
Velsia
- J.C.Denny, 12, Wendy Close, Pin Mill, Suffolk
Fly
- Major Floyd E. Jack, 4458B, Mulberry St., Mountain Home AFB,
Idaho 83648, U.S.A.
- W.E.McTammany, Woldhurst, Runcton Lane, North Mundham, Sussex
Cutlass
- D.L.Marples, 24, DeFreville Avenue, Cambridge
Mollihawk IV
- W. Mills, 215, Magdalen Rd., London, SW 18
De Loop
- J. Millward, 1, Silverdale Cottages, North Street, Westbourne,
Emsworth, Hants. Wind
- R.D.Moass, 8, Grenfield Court, Birch Tree Drive, Emsworth,
Hants. Zephyr
- A.W.Mosley, 5, Armstrong Terrace, South Shields, Co.Durham,
NE33 4LE
- P.A.Newman, 7, Stevenage Rd., Hitchin, Herts.
Nereid II
- Martin L. Rubin, 3161, South Ocean Drive, Hallandale,
Florida 33009, U.S.A.
- Frank W. Summers, M.D., 1041, St. Regis Place, Santa Ana,
California 92705 U.S.A.
- William E. Vaughan, 440, Pacific Avenue, San Francisco,
California 94133 U.S.A. Billiken

DIARY DATES

Saturday, 15th January. Annual General Meeting at the Cruising Association Rooms, Chiltern Court, Baker Street, London NW 1. 6 p.m. onwards. There are some important matters to be discussed, but this will also be a social occasion. Light refreshments.

Saturday, 4th March. Social evening at Hardway Sailing Club, Gosport. Hoped to have films, please bring slides. Buffet.

Sunday, 26th March. East Coast Area meeting at 70b, Fambridge Road, Maldon. We must have a new organisational structure to continue to run the E.C.Race, so please come along.

Saturday, 8th April. Fitting out Party at Benfleet Yacht Club, Canvey Road, Canvey Island. 7 p.m. Food, slides, etc.

Saturday - Monday, 27th - 29th May. Rally in Poole Harbour.

Saturday, 22nd July. East Coast Race. Please note the date and help make this a real record entry.

Saturday 16th September. Solent Race - lets make this a record too.

NOTE As there will not be another Newsletter until after Easter, this will be the last notice for all events up to the party at Benfleet Y.C.

READING MATTER Seafarer books have re-published Jack London's wonderful book The Cruise of the Snark (illustrated) at £2.50 plus 10p p&p. This classic of Pacific Island cruising has long been out of print. Please order through the Association Secretary.

FOR SALE

Cotton sails - Luff 20'6", Leach 18'0", Foot 12'0" £4;
 & Luff 16'0", Leach 12'0", Foot 8'0", £2; both white.
 W.D.Robinson, Afzelia, 8, The Rookery, Emsworth, Hants.

IRENE 22' x 9' x 1' Southend Beach boat. Terylene sails two years old; spare cotton main in good condition. Roller reefing main and foresail; new standing rigging this year. All running rigging in good condition. 2 Drop rudders, 2 anchors and chain, sweeps, all-over winter cover, Viking sheet winch new this year. This boat, built with extra thick sternpost to take inboard engine would make an excellent cabin conversion. Did well in East Coast Race, and cruised to Ostend this year. £400 o.n.o.
 N. Titshall, 29, Woodfam Close, Leigh on Sea, Essex.

JOHN DORY 6 ton T.M. gaff cutter, converted Itchen ferry type. 24.5' LOA., 24' LWL., 8.0' Beam, 4.0' draft. Pine on oak, copper fastened. Parsons Prawn engine; watertight cockpit particularly convenient for large crew, family, or fishing. Spacious accommodation with standing headroom in saloon and focsle. Four berths, Hydra flush toilet, galley with sink and double burner primus; 25 gal. water tank feeding galley pump. Lying Heybridge Basin, £900. G. Wardell, Little Acre, Elm Green Lane, Danbury, Essex Danbury 3864.

WHIMBREL 23'6" x 7'8" x 3'8", pitch pine on oak, lead keel. Stuart 4 H.P. Varnish work and decks need attention. Designed and built by Luke of Hamble in 1906. Lying Yarmouth, I.o.W. £495 o.n.o. Seen by arrangement with the owner or with Harold Hayles at Yarmouth. J.A.Higginbotham, Watkins Chemist, High St., Shepton Mallet, Somerset. Tel. 2192.

Summer Cruise to the Baltic aboard Solvig.

The Solvig will sail from West Mersea, Essex on Saturday, June 17th, 1972, to cruise the Danish Islands. The cruise will be divided into two fortnights charters; Saturday, 17th June to Saturday, 1st July; and Sunday, 2nd July to Saturday, 15th July. The changeover will be made at Odense, which is on a rail route to the ferry terminal of Esbjerg with its direct connection to Harwich. During the second fortnight, Solvig will return to West Mersea.

The charter rate for both these cruises will be £50 per head. This sum will cover all costs in connection with the running of the vessel, but does not include food.

In addition to the normal crew of Skipper and ^{Mate} there will be a cook who will be responsible for victualling and catering at the charterers directions.

For further information, please write to Charles and Janet Harker, The Post House, Abberton, Colchester, Essex.

PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS Would members who pay Subscriptions by cash please note that the 50p for 1972 will be due very shortly. It is intended to look into the question of keeping track of cash subscriptions so that individual reminders can be sent more easily. As it is, the task of finding the Newsletter envelopes for the late payers is too much to cope with, and we must leave it to members to remember whether they still owe their Subscription. Chasing late Subs. involves a lot of work for what is now a very small return !

CHANGES OF ADDRESSES Please do not forget to notify us of any change of address. It is depressing to get back Newsletters marked 'Gone Away'. We can't keep these until we hear of a new address - although we always print a generous supply of spare copies these go quite quickly, so if you miss any issues, it is most unlikely that we shall be able to replace it when we find where you have gone.

OLD GAFFERS AT THE ISLAND SAILING CLUB

On Friday, October 22nd, Bart Pot, Alec Rangabe and myself cast off Dreva's moorings at Gosport and motored out into the turbulent Solent. Alec was suffering from a severe dose of British Rail food, and I was suffering from having spent the previous evening with a group of Scotsmen celebrating the fact that their wives had not been hurt in the disastrous explosion in Glasgow. An argument between my nose and Dreva's mast had been won by the mast! Only Bart felt normal and prepared to enjoy the sail! As Alec and Bart knew the boat, I was left to steer whilst they got up the main and staysail, and with Dreva alternately trying to bury her foredeck and stand on her transom that was quite a long job! But with sail up we could steady her and despite the gloomy grey sky, fresh to strong wind (against us, naturally) and cold flying spray, I began to enjoy the trip. About half an hour after we had stopped the engine, Alec did some abstruse higher mathematics and announced that we needed at least another half knot if we were to save our tide to Cowes. So on went the engine again. The air cooled diesel provided welcome central heating in the cockpit, and Bart handed out tea and toast. With the engine helping the sails, we just made it into Cowes, and picked up the visitors buoy just after dark.

A rapid change into formal clothes, and ashore in the dinghy, to be met by the Secretary and Rear Commodore of the Island Sailing Club. A warm by the fire, a drink, a rapid dinner, and it was time for me to present to some 200 members of the I.S.C. an account of the O.G.A. and its boats.

It was most gratifying to see such a large audience, and to receive such a fine welcome from a club such as the Island S.C.. My collection of slides was nicely augmented by Harold Hayles, who brought along a fine set of colour slides of the 1970 Solent Race - slides which showed a collision about which the Committee had heard nothing! It seemed that quite a number of the audience had come along specially to hear about Fanny - I was introduced to one of her previous owners, and a descendant of her original owner introduced himself to me. Altogether it seemed a very pleasant and successful evening, and we retired to bed on Dreva looking forward to a nice brisk run back to Gosport the next day.

But when we poked our heads out on the Saturday, we found the lightest of breezes from the East, with a lovely clear sky. A wonderful day to be out on the water, even if we did have to motor with the sails flapping idly!

I shall be giving a shorter talk on the O.G.A. (combined with a short talk on Mystic Seaport) to the Lowestoft Cruising Club on February 2nd. If any members have slides of gaffers which they no longer require, I would be most grateful for them. I know that many rolls of film are expended on race days, and I suspect that a high percentage of the results get thrown away. We are always keen to add slides, negatives or prints to our collection, if owners have any they no longer want.

MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM

In the past, whenever I read the Preface to Alan Villiers book 'Cruise of the Conrad', I used to feel saddened that his splendid little ship, a fine example of European maritime craftsmanship and tradition, should end her days in an American museum. I visualised her slowly but surely deteriorating, not properly appreciated by those who saw her, an alien intruder in some local museum. Possibly my thoughts were influenced by the fate of the other world-girdler of the same period; the Cap Pilar, which disintegrated on the River Colne, unloved and unappreciated. Now, having had the good fortune to be able to visit Mystic and walk on the decks of the Joseph Conrad, I think how fortunate it is that Villiers did not have the funds to sail her back to the Orwell! At Mystic, she is loved, pampered, and cared for in a way I would never have thought

possible. And she is not alone there.

Mystic Seaport lies on an inlet on the Connecticut shoreline, almost due North of the Eastern end of Long Island. Ever since the area was settled, Mystic has been a seafaring and shipbuilding port. The Marine Historical Association Museum occupies some forty acres of land on the Eastern bank of the Mystic River, between the Interstate Highway 95 and State Highway 1. Greenmanville Avenue, Route 27, runs parallel to the river bank between the two highways, and forms the Eastern boundary of the Museum area. The museum occupies the whole of a small peninsular, which forms pleasant, sheltered pools above and below the Museum area. Even without the Museum, Mystic would be a lovely spot to visit - as it is, it is a truly enchanting place.

The Museum is far more than a collection of old, unused boats. It is a representative seafaring community, with a waterside village, of which most of the buildings have been specially brought to the site. The Museum, both boats and buildings, is brought to life by the Association's staff of translators - people who can explain the exhibits to the visitors, and most of whom are retired craftsmen or seamen. My two days at Mystic was not nearly enough time to see all there was to be seen, and to chat to all the interesting people.

At the southern end of the Museum site is the main preservation area - a complete boatyard where much of the restoration work on the exhibits is done. From this area, a quayside walk swings round the southern side of the peninsular on which much of the Museum stands, with a village green to the right of the walk. On the edge of the green fronting the walk is a collection of old time buildings. The first of these is Mr. Thomas' Oyster Shop; a small wooden shed used for opening and sorting oysters. Then there is a somewhat ornate building, the Block Island Life-Saving Station, with next to it a Half Way House - a small wooden shed which used to be half way between two life saving stations on the Cape Cod beach, at which the beach patrols from the two stations would exchange tokens to prove they had completed their patrol. Next, at the end of the green, is another large wooden building which houses the Mystic River Diorama - a beautiful scale model of the area as it was just over 100 years ago, with boats being built in the various yards, and other boats moored at the quays. This model alone is worth a full day's study - not just the few minutes I was able to devote to it.

From the Diorama a road leads across the middle of the peninsular to the back of the row of buildings which front the northern shore. To the left of this road are the joiners shop and small craft laboratory, and an area reminiscent of an old style boatyard, with building moulds, knees, and other odd ships timbers lying round. The waterside walk is broken on the southern side of the peninsular by a boathouse and an open slipway; then almost to the tip of the peninsular is a 250ft. segment of the Plymouth Cordage Company's ropewalk. This ropewalk was built in 1824, and was in use until 1947. Unfortunately this exhibit was not being demonstrated, although it was all set up and appeared to be in working order. Beyond the ropewalk, right on the tip of the spit, is a little lighthouse - a copy of the Brant Point Light in Nantucket.

To the North of the ropewalk there are various Youth Training buildings, small boat jetties, and a building which houses the small craft exhibits. Following the Northern side of the spit inland, there is a large three storey building set back behind the end of the ropewalk - the Charles Mallory Sail Lofts. This building, like so many others, has been moved onto its present site from its original location, which in this case was just down river. The ground floor of the building now houses N.G. Fish's Ship Chandlery - a fascinating cavernous place containing old ships wheels, lifebelts, guns, binnacles, lamps, etc. etc.,

with an assortment of winches and other similar objects outside round the door. When I went in, the whole place smelt deliciously of Stockholm tar - I wondered whether they kept some open for atmosphere, but it turned out that somebody had upset a tin on one of the upper floors a few days earlier !

On the floor above the chandlers is William White's rigging loft. This was one of the very few areas I visited which did not have a translator to talk to, and since all the tools etc. were quite familiar I did not stay long - just long enough to notice an old salvage tackle hanging up - I should think each block would take two men to lift it - it was enormous !

The top floor of the building houses the actual sail loft. The most obvious feature here was a gigantic stove suspended by wires from the rafters to leave a totally clear floor. Here again, the tools of the trade were familiar, but an aged Dane, Mr. Andersen, was on hand to explain the exhibits. What a wonderful character he turned out to be ! Extremely reticent, unfortunately, about his life and experiences afloat - 'But it was nothing, really' - his clear eyes gazing at one. But at least he would talk about the Joseph Conrad - he knew her before Villiers bought her, when she was a Danish training ship. And when she was recently completely re-rigged at Mystic, he supervised the job. We spent some time poring over the lines and rigging drawing he had. I could happily have spent all day listening to Mr. Andersen - I do hope the authorities at Mystic have taken many tape recordings of all he has to tell ! (And also of the many other interesting people there now.)

Straight across from the door of the chandlery shop is a cedar shingled building facing out on to the quay, with two brick chimneys, from one of which a curl of smoke emerged. The sign over the double doors read 'A. Peters, Shipsmith'. This shop was originally built at Merrill's wharf, New Bedford, and when it was moved to Mystic, even the original earth floor was taken up and re-laid. A neat little sign on one of the doors said 'enter', but on first going in out of the strong sunlight it was hard to see anything in the gloomy interior other than a red glow on the hearth to the right. Then the smith himself, possibly the finest character at Mystic Seaport, Mr. Heath, 84 years old, 6 feet 2 inches tall, and nearly as thin as the harpoon shafts for which he fashioned the heads ! Wisps of grey hair emerged from the edges of a small skull cap, wire framed spectacles clung to the bridge of his straight nose, and his smith's leather apron partially hid a tartan check shirt and faded slacks. And could he talk ! As he reached a long, sinewy arm to pull the worn, well polished handle of the giant bellows, or as he tapped away at various pieces of iron, his tongue was never still. And what a joy it was to listen to him - how he came to be at Mystic after many years with the Electric Boat Company - 'because the directors wanted somebody to gab to the lovely visitors, and I like gabbing, and I get paid for doing what I like. No, I don't make much new - I show how the tools are used, and I gab.' And he did ! He had a wonderful flow of stories for the tourists, and the less the tourists knew about boats, the more wonderful the stories became. From how he ran away to sea at an early age, to a terrible water spout which devoured the ship on which a friend of his was sailing. Plus yarns of the special harpoons he made for Cap'n Ahab. It was no wonder that the Peters Driggs Shipsmiths Shop was usually crowded. About every fifteen minutes Mr. Heath would gather up a harpoon head and some other bit of ironmongery and step outside the shop to pose for yet another batch of photographs. He was very much the long, lean, New Englander one reads about, but he was very far from taciturn ! Not unnaturally, having made his acquaintance, I planned my tours of Mystic to pass his shop as often as possible. If I had spent all my time at Mystic listening to Mr. Heath, it would have been time very well spent.

Next to the Shipsmith's shop is a small wooden fire station, then the wooden-built premises of the Mystic Bridge Weavers, where a charming little elderly lady demonstrated the weaving of 'goose-eye' pattern cloth on a hand operated loom. Next comes the Hoop Makers, then the Mystic Press, with old flat-bed presses. After the Mystic Press comes Edwards House; a charming little Mansard roofed, double-fronted timber planked house, with a genuine Lem Putt One Holer at the bottom of the small, neat back garden. (I forgot to check whether there was a Sears Roebuck catalogue on the nail, but the whole of Mystic Seaport Museum was so well organised I have little doubt there would have been !). The Nantucket Cooperage, the Mystic Bank and Shipping Office, and Shaefer's Spouter Tavern, complete with shady verandah and handy bench seat, complete this row of quayside buildings.

From the chandlers store, a second street runs behind the quayside buildings with still more period buildings - Geo. H. Stone's general store; Bringham's Apothecary's and Doctor's shop; the Fishtown Chapel; Boardman's School; the Buckingham House, an 18th century house furnished in period style, and in which another charming elderly lady demonstrated rug making; and the Pugsley Clock Shop with a truly fascinating collection of old instruments and timepieces. Fronting on this street, in the back of the Mystic Press building, is the Shipcarver's shop, where Willard Shepard wields the gouge and mallet. Willard is not quite so old as most of the other demonstrators, and is a very widely travelled man who has co-authored historical books with his father. His shop contains a wonderful collection of carvings, and Willard is usually working on some commission - from an 8" whale carving at 7 dollars to a 6 foot Chesapeake Eagle at 440 dollars, or a 32" Jenny Lind figurehead at 220 dollars.

Beyond the point where the two streets join is the Stillman Building, which was once a mill, and is now named after one of the founders of the Seaport Museum. This building is a museum within a museum, as it contains collections of figureheads, nameboards, models of ships of all types, and whaling exhibits, including some beautiful scrimshaw work. Then behind the buildings already mentioned are the Seaport Planetarium, the Aids to Navigation exhibit; various other houses of interest; a refreshment building, and a large souvenir shop. Tucked away in odd corners are open fronted storage sheds full of part frames, grown crooks for knees, and other intriguing bits of boats.

Thus even without any boats around at all, Mystic Seaport would be a fascinating place to while away the odd week or two !

But of course for many the boats are the major interest at Mystic. There are at the moment three really large boats; the L.A.Dunton, which is moored alongside a jetty opposite the southern corner of the village green; the Joseph Conrad, which lies alongside the northern side of the spit, near the ropewalk and Chandlers Shop; and the Charles W. Morgan up near the Stillman Building.

The L.A.Dunton is the most graceful of the three; a 110 ft. Gloucester fishing schooner, built in 1921 at Essex, Mass. by Arthur Story, to a design by Thomas F. McManus, for cod fishing on the Newfoundland Banks. She is such a beautifully proportioned vessel that it is very hard indeed to realise just how big she is. She lies afloat alongside her jetty, a lovely dark green hull with black rail, white inside the bulwarks, low white deckhouses, spars glistening with varnish, and two stacks of stone coloured dories nested beside the main mast. She is fully rigged, but no sails are bent on, and at night she is floodlit so the delicate tracery of her rigging makes an unforgettable picture. Her spars are not small - the main boom is a mere 75 feet long, and some twenty feet of it projects beyond the shapely counter. With such an overhang, the main sheet has to be secured to a spider band just over the

stern, and from this spider footropes run out to the boom end - these footropes being appropriately known as the widow-makers! The prospect of going out on those footropes to tie down a reef in a blinding blizzard of snow over the Newfoundland Banks is indeed daunting! When I looked over her, a veteran shipwright and seaman, Bill Johnson, had charge of her decks, but he proved to be most reticent about his own life and work. Below decks in the aft cabin Cap'n Ellery Thompson sat in a corner ready to explain the layout below to visitors. Cap'n Ellery could certainly talk about boats when asked, but of his own life he was also rather reticent, although I gathered he had had a full and adventurous seagoing career. He was more willing to talk about his hobby - marine painting - and two postcard copies of his paintings are amongst my treasured souvenirs of Mystic Seaport.

On the other side of the L.A. Dunton's jetty is moored another schooner, the Regina M, a Quoddy boat built at Perry, Maine, in 1900. Her most distinctive feature is her 'pinky' stern, with the bulwarks carried aft of the sternpost in a manner somewhat similar to a Hastings lugger. The Regina M is not a small boat, but she is dwarfed by the main boom of the L.A. Dunton on the other side of the jetty.

Laid up ashore for very extensive repairs in a shed on the Southern side of the spit opposite the chandlers is the 77ft. schooner Australia; a mid nineteenth century centreboard trading boat. Her hull was in very poor shape, with many planks out, and several sections of framing removed. As the shed was not much larger than the hull, it was not possible to get a clear overall idea of her hull shape. The restoration and rebuilding is a major project, and it was clearly being tackled in a manner which showed proper appreciation of true craftsmanship, and I hope that sometime I shall be able to get over to see the results of the work.

The next boat to catch the eye of the visitor is another schooner moored at a quay on the end of the spit; the 61ft. yacht Brilliant. She was built in 1932 by Nevins to a Sparkman and Stephens design, and was formerly owned by Briggs S. Cunningham. Now she is kept superbly in seagoing trim and used for the Seaport's Mariner Training programs, and unfortunately visitors are not allowed aboard. From the quayside it is very hard indeed to realise that this magnificent, fine lined boat with gleaming brightwork and full range of modern aids to navigation, including a radar aerial on the mainmast, is nearly forty years old.

Probably the most impressive exhibit at the Seaport at the time of my visit is the 100ft. full-rigged ship Joseph Conrad; the former Danish training ship Georg Stage, which Alan Villiers took round the world as a training ship before the last war. Like the L.A. Dunton she is fully rigged and in superb condition, but although she looks all ready to go off voyaging, she has only one sail bent on her foremast for training purposes. She is used to provide accommodation for the Seaport's youth training program so visitors are not allowed below, but there is plenty to study and admire on her decks. Looking at the sparkling varnish on her wheel, skylights, deckhouse doors, etc., it is very hard indeed to realise that she is nearly ninety years old and has probably trained more young men in the arts of true seamanship than any other ship. Some of the woodwork has been renewed at Mystic, but other parts are original - but I don't think any visitor would be able to tell the new from the old. I wished I had had the time to trace out the details of her standing and running rigging, with a myriad of different sized ropes coming down to their belaying pins. Although she is shorter than the L.A. Dunton, her black iron hull, high bulwarks, and full height deck houses make her seem a very much larger vessel. Although Villiers commented on the small size of her sails when compared with the big trading barques and ships, her yards are quite an impressive length.

One exhibit is almost unbelievable to modern small boat sailors; the 29ft. centreboarder Annie. This fairly beamy boat with a very hollow bow and low freeboard was built at Mystic, for racing, in 1880, and her sail area is a mere 1,313 square feet set in a simple gaff sloop rig with no topsail. The base of her sail plan is nearly 70 feet - more than twice the hull length. Her main sheet runs from the boom end down to a pair of long, slender outrigger spars braced down to the stern by stays which must have taken a tremendous strain even in a light wind, and the tack of the enormous boomed foresail is secured to the end of a slender bowsprit which curves down until it looks as if it nearly touches the water. The long bobstay runs straight in to the stem with no dolphin striker, and must also have been very highly stressed. This most unscientific racing machine and her contemporaries were kept upright (sometimes !) by a crew of about a dozen who humped sandbags from one bilge to the other every time she came about. (One assumes these boats were never gybed intentionally in any weight of wind !)

The third big boat at Mystic, and the one which they use on some of their publicity material, is the wooden hulled three masted whaler Charles W. Morgan - the only survivor of a once numerous type. She dates back to 1841, when Jethro and Zachariah Hillman built her in New Bedford, Massachusetts. At the time of my visit she was not in such good shape as the two other big boats. Although she lies alongside a quay, she is not afloat, but is resting in a built up shingle berth whilst work is done below the waterline on her bluff bowed hull. Ultimately, when the restoration is complete, it is intended to refloat her. Her hull is not pretty, being very boxy and abrupt ended, but it is clearly a hull well fitted for its purpose, and it gives an impression of power and carrying capacity. The line of painted gun ports on the side of the hull adds to an impressive overall picture. The hull at over 27ft. beam and 17ft. depth is large for her 113ft overall length, and like the Joseph Conrad, she gives one the impression of being much larger than she really is. Unfortunately, at the time of my visit, only the lower and topmasts were fitted, so it was not possible to get any impression of how her 13,000 square feet of sail area must have looked. Certainly without her upper spars and yards she had a somewhat forlorn and unbalanced look.

The layout on deck was fairly complete, with the heavy davits for the whaleboats, the overhead racks for blubber knives etc., and the brick tryworks with their two large iron pots. Below decks some of the very cramped accommodation was complete, but extensive restoration work on the lower hull framing necessitated a certain amount of stripping out. It was most gratifying to notice the incredibly high standard of craftsmanship evident in the work in progress. America is certainly not totally lacking in skilled craftsmen who are prepared to put real loving care into a job, and in America it seems there is generally more money available to support the work of these craftsmen than we have here. I was both surprised and delighted by the very high standards set at Mystic Seaport.

There are a number of smaller craft afloat at Mystic, such as the Noank smack Emma C. Berry, built by R. and J. Palmer in 1866, and just launched after a thorough refit when I was there; the Long Island oyster sloop Nellie; the cutter Fox, and a beautiful Friendship Sloop, the Estella A.

Then to complete the scene there is the small boat collection. Some of these are housed under open sided roofs along the southern side of the spit, and most of them are under a lean-to alongside the Ropewalk or in a building alongside the Joseph Conrad's berth. This collection includes native canoes, a beautifully restored Catboat, several small Herreshoff racing yachts, whaleboats, dories, and other inshore fishing craft. On the green just behind the building which houses the Mystic Diorama the 27ft. Ella View

is on display. She is an attractive open boat with a slightly raked stem which runs straight down to join her long, straight keel, giving her quite unusual bow lines. She was built back in 1893 for shad fishing on Albemarle Sound.

The wonderful overall picture of Mystic Seaport was completed when I was there by numerous small boats which were being rowed, paddled, or sailed around the Museum area. As there was a small boat convention on that week, some of these may have been special visitors, but I gathered that many of these boats are regularly seen in the Mystic River. One which particularly caught my eye was a Kingston lobster boat - a small black hull with one mast setting a gaff sail and one mast setting a sprit sail. Many of these small boats are antiques which have been lovingly restored by their owners, and I was very sorry indeed that the shortness of my visit prevented me from taking as much interest as I would have liked in these privately done restorations. If nothing else, I would have liked to have met some of the owners and invited them to join the O.G.A. - they would be members we could be proud of !

One thought which consoles me somewhat for the briefness of my stay in Mystic is that someday I hope to go back again and be able to spend far longer there, and since the Museum seems to have been growing at an ever increasing rate since its inception in 1929, there should be even more for me to see and enjoy. If any members are contemplating visiting the U.S.A. for a holiday or on business, I would very strongly urge that they try and include Mystic Seaport in their visit. J.A.S.

After that account of an overseas nautical museum, it is only fair to print an account of a British venture on similar lines, kindly provided by Colin McLellan.

After reading a note inserted in the O.G.A. Newsletter about an open invitation to members to attend the opening of the Sailing Barge Museum at Sittingbourne on June 12th 1971, we decided that as we had never visited Sittingbourne before we would try and be there.

The only possible time to go was on the Saturday morning tide at 03 23. This would enable us to be at the entrance to Milton Creek about 2 hours before high water. Thanks to light winds Saturday morning we ended up going through the Swale via the Queen's Bridge at Kingsferry, where we had a wait of only ten minutes, contrary to previous trips. This shorter waiting period was confirmed at Sittingbourne to be the normal practice now. After leaving the bridge all was plain sailing up to the entrance to Milton Creek. This lays between a patch of saltings called the Lilleys and an outfall jetty adjoining the paper mill.

As you enter Milton Creek, a little way in on the starboard side it is possible to see Kemsley Down Railway Station. This is the end of a light railway line that runs out from its own station at Sittingbourne. The line and rolling stock used to be under the control of Bowaters who own the paper mill, but it is now run by a band of keen enthusiasts. If you have any spare time whilst visiting Sittingbourne, it is very well worth a visit.

Further in on the Port side is a yacht club whose members sail various types of dinghies, and on the same bank a little further on is a brickworks. Then a little further on on the other side is a jetty devoted to scrap metal. Roughly a mile from the entrance, Murston lies on the Port side. This is mainly a cement works area, but used to be the real old heart of the barge building industry. Unfortunately the barge jetties and quays are badly silted up now. Only the museum at Sittingbourne appears to have any photographs showing Murston's former prosperity.

Just off Murston the ships boat from the coasting barge Convoy gave us a tow up to Crown Quay, Sittingbourne. As the official Museum opening time was not far off, the Skipper allowed us to remain alongside his barge for the time being. We tied up and then rowed over to the Museum.

Soon after we landed the opening ceremony commenced with speeches. All the speakers praised the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. O'Shea and their volunteer helpers for the work done in getting the project under way. Among the speakers was the son of Charles Burley, the former owner of the Sail Loft. The local Beauty Queen then declared the Museum open.

A lot of hard work has gone into getting this project under way. The ground has been cleared, and the main attraction of the Museum is the reconstructed Sail Loft. This has the ground floor given over to photographs, paintings, models, scale drawings, and tools associated with barges, while the upper floor has been used to display sails and rigging.

A short distance away is a building containing the forge, complete with a large hearth and leather bellows. Hung around the walls are samples of barge iron work.

The Curator, Mr. O'Shea and his wife who is the Secretary live aboard their own barge the Nellie Parker, which is moored in the inlet opposite the sail loft. There is also a set of barge blocks in this inlet.

Unfortunately, because of the awkward tide times only two Gaffers arrived on Saturday, the converted Morecambe Bay Prawner Snowdrop, and ourselves in Xebek. The coasting barge Convoy had arrived on the Friday. The weather kept dry and warm, and the large number of visitors partly made up for the small showing of vessels.

If you do decide to visit the Museum you can be sure of a very warm welcome from Mr. and Mrs. O'Shea. For the deep keeled boats there are plenty of mud berths available alongside various jetties, and the town of Sittingbourne is only a short distance away. The local inn nearest to the Museum is the White Hart, a small, cosy place.

In time to come, Milton Creek will doubtless be as popular as Conyer for a weekend visit, and the deserted jetties will then become alive again and Sittingbourne will regain some of its former glory. But in the meantime you should make certain allowances for its neglected appearance.

OLD GAFFERS RACES Over the last few years our races have grown almost beyond recognition, and some letters I have received this year make it clear that we have some entrants who are not aware of the real objects of these races, and of some of the details of how the races are run. I hope that nobody will be in any way offended by any of the following comments, which are offered in an effort to ensure that our races can continue to grow, but can retain their true character and purpose. I hope that all members will read, note, and tell any other likely entrants.

Firstly, a question which seems to have bothered many entrants recently - Handicapping. We do try to be as fair as we possibly can, and experience has shown that in general handicaps based on known performance, or 'He beat me last year' degenerate to a session of 'Who's turn is it to win this year?' or, even worse, 'Who bought the handicapper the biggest drink?'. Either of these would be quite intolerable in events such as ours, and clearly we can not race the variety of boats we do without some form of handicap. Therefore, we use the old R.Y.A. formula for finding the T(H)CF, which is based solely on the dimensions (and age) of the boat. This formula is applied to the figures sent in on the entry form without any reference whatsoever to any figures relating to any other boat. Sometimes, it is obvious that there

has been some mistake in the measurement, and a dimension may be queried, or checked against that for a boat known to be similar, but generally the figures sent in by the owners are accepted (after all, the whole sport of yacht racing depends on the committee being able to trust the entrants!). Now we know that the handicapping system is not perfect - bigger boats tend to lose out unless there is a very good breeze and the water is fairly smooth; very shallow hulled boats usually handicap very badly - but over the years, if the effects of different wind strengths and the effects of the turn of tide on a race tend to average out, then the system we use does seem to work fairly well; in fact I would say from having analysed the results of many races that it works remarkably well.

Also, it would appear from the number of 'tail-end Charlies' who enter year after year that an owner with a boat which does not handicap well under the system would rather lose the race and know that his handicap was fixed without any bias or favour than win with a suspicion of unfair 'fiddling'. As one of the founders of the original Old Gaffers Race was in the legal profession, and the other was a scientist, we seem to have inherited a tradition of honest, mathematical exactitude in our handicapping!

Now the purpose and conduct of our races. We are not organising a Fastnet, America's Cup, or Olympic Selection Race. Our events are races AND RALLIES. In the earlier years, there was not much competitive spirit, but over the years, this has come in, and owners who formerly decried any form of racing now scrub and tune their boats and really do try and win. And this is very welcome. But in competitive racing, there must be clearly defined rules, which will allow the boats to sail in closer company than the normal collision regulations would permit, and to ensure that a boat which must give way loses as little ground as possible. Now these rules can be used in two ways. They can be known, and applied to resolve a right of way between two boats of substantially equal speed, and in the event of a collision they can be applied to ascertain the legal liability. And that is how we would hope they will be regarded. Alas, those rules can also be used to 'put another boat out of the race' and by being pedantic to force a retirement or a protest meeting. That is how we do not want to see them applied. We are proud that in all our races since the O.G.A. was formed we have had only two protests - and both of those protests arose to settle liability following collisions in which some damage had occurred. We have had other protests suggested, but fortunately the good sense of the owners involved has avoided the need to hear the protest.

We like to see our races won by clean, gentlemanly sailing. It is quite possible to sail to win, and yet to behave in a courteous manner to other entrants. I think the point is nicely made in a letter I received from an East Coast entrant after this year's race - and this letter was not 'sour grapes' - he had just taken a major prize!

"I agree that declarations should be handed in, but appreciate the problems of those who have to sail away at once. May I suggest that a Committee Boat, complete with a rowing boat is stationed a distance up river of the finishing line, so that boats wanting to get away can heave to close by and give their declarations to the rowing boat; lets face it, it doesn't take long to write ones name on the bottom of a declaration form!

"I hope you will be patient with me while I go on - another matter comes to mind - when I first sailed in the Gaffers Race I was most impressed by the good sense displayed by boats helmsmen; i.e., small boats gave large boats water regardless of the rules - simply because big boats cant turn fast. When it was obvious that one boat was faster than another no attempt was made to mess about playing with the

racing rules. Everybody went along with "overtaking vessel keeps clear - as long as overtaken vessel maintains course and speed".

"I regret that the conduct of certain boats this year is downright idiotic - and I speak as an ex watchkeeping officer, R.N.V.R..

"At the Knoll, when about 50 boats went round in a few minutes, some people - regardless of the light wind and small steerage way - barged into the mark - 'Rose' was run aboard by a windward overtaking boat and we had all our gear knocked about, and had to drop our lug down to avoid a capsize.

"Shortly after this, we were run down directly, from astern by a boat with no forr'd lookout whose helmsman didn't see us until we were hailing him to help clear our gear off his bobstay.

"It could be said that I ought to have protested these vessels - but I am very unwilling to do so, as this is the thin end of the wedge that finishes up with the general bitching that they have in yacht racing.

"I have talked about this to other Old Gaffers, informally, and I submit that unless something is done soon a lot of people are not going to race again.

"This sort of thing is really tragic, as the Association has done a magnificent job in regenerating interest in traditional craft. Has all this effort got to be wasted because of the usual lunatic fringe ?

"There is a prize given for Seamanship each race - do we have to have a Coroner's Inquest as well ?

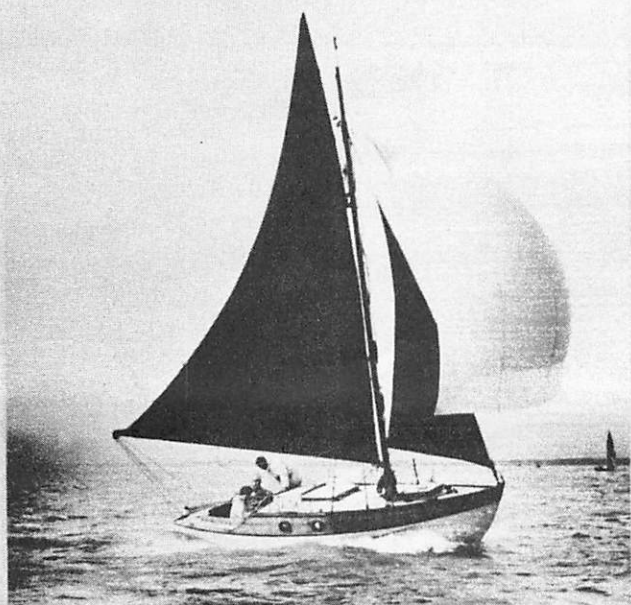
"I hope you will excuse my bringing these matters up. - - -"

Yours sincerely, Ian Logan (Red Red Rose).

That letter was not written in the heat of the moment, but over a month after the event. And it worries me. I am VERY glad Ian did write. The Committee can not possibly know all that goes on in these races, and Ian's points need to be made. I have so far been very happy to run the O.G.A. Races simply because they were so notably free from the petty squabbles and 'sea-lawyers' that seem to ruin so many other yachting events - and which had made me drop out of helping to run local races etc. I think the same thing applies to most of the other helpers on Race Days. So not only is there a risk that the races will lose entrants if owners adopt the tactics used in One Design Dinghy team races, there is a very real risk that they will also lose the organisers and helpers as well. Now I'm sure none of us want that to happen, so can we all, please, keep to the true spirit of our original Old Gaffers Races - Sail to win, by all means, but give the other fellow a fair chance as well, and win by being a better sailor in a better boat - not by applying the racing rules to force a competitor to give way or to luff when in all probability it will not benefit you, but will merely hurt his chances. J.A.S.

HELPERS BEFORE THE EAST COAST RACE This year's East Coast Race proved that the event has now got too big to be run by one person. The pre-race paperwork is just too much now. As the O.G.A. grows, my spare time seems to diminish, and we have gone beyond the cross-over point. The organisation (?) coped this year, but I was painfully conscious that it was ONLY JUST. Any small extra burden could have been disastrous. Therefore, for the 1972 race, we are proposing to hold 'working parties' at 70b, Farnbridge Road, Maldon, on the five Friday evenings preceding the race - i.e. from June 23rd. Half a dozen helpers each Friday evening should enable us to get all the work cleared up easily, and enable arrangements to be made for helpers other than Ian Edmond (who does far more than his share) to get out the programmes the weekend before the race.

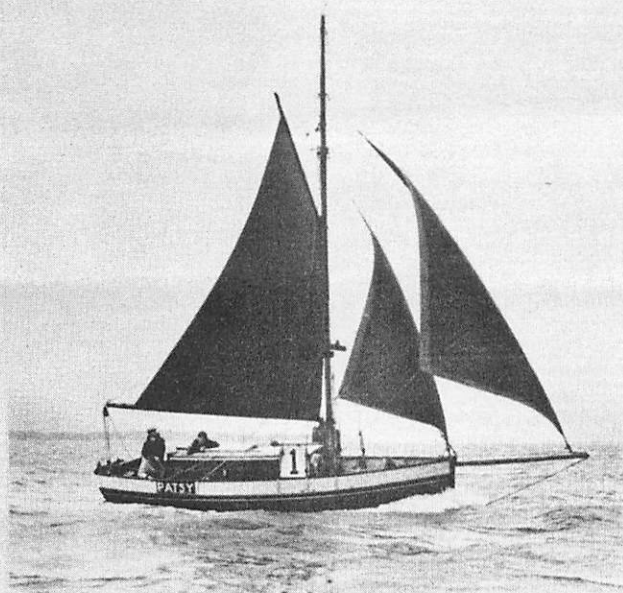
SOME 1970 PRIZEWINNERS



SAGA
Channel Plate



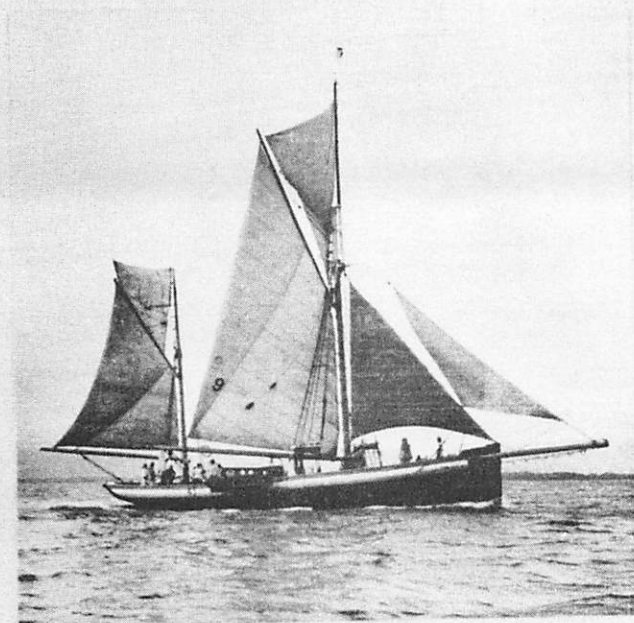
FANNY
Emsworth Cleat



PATSY
Laggard's Ladle



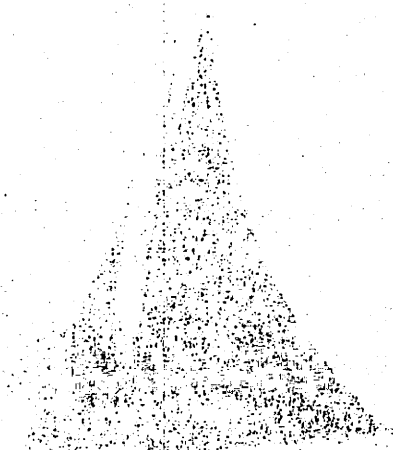
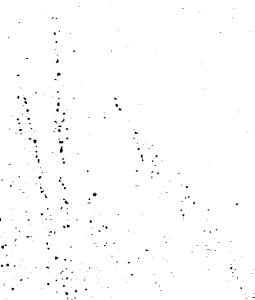
BETTY
Channel Cup



TERMINIST
Paxton Trophy



MELMORE
Deadeye Trophy & Le Havre Plate



EXHIBITION 1991-2002

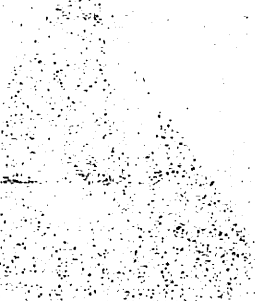
EXHIBITION 1991-2002

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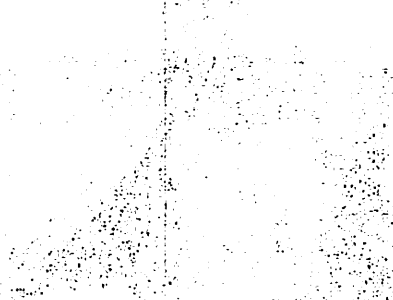
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